

gonys olivaceus is evidently a species of *Vireolanius*. We may also remark that *Lipaugus unirufus* is a very different bird from Lafresnaye's *Querula fuscocinerea*. Mr. Salvin has recently brought numerous specimens of the former bird from Coban, Vera Paz : the latter is from New Granada.

XXXVII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

M. O. DES MURS has written us the following letter in reply to our remarks on the egg of *Balaniceps* (*anteà*, p. 188), and on his proposal to associate *Passer* with the *Ploceinæ*.

“Paris, 4 Mai, 1860.

“MON CHER MONSIEUR,—Décidément, je compte, dans le nombre de vos savans ou studieux correspondants, je ne dirai pas un ennemi, mais un collègue en ornithologie, qui se montre animé envers moi de tout autre sentiment que celui de la bienveillance.

“Je trouve encore, dans votre intéressant ‘Ibis’ d’Avril, un article qui en est la preuve, et qui, si je l’ai bien compris, s’exprime, entr’autres choses, en ces termes, au sujet de ma description de l’œuf du *Balaniceps* :—‘. . . et certainement, il ne pond pas des œufs *tachetés*, comme M. Des Murs s’avance INGÉNUMENT!’—‘and certainly does not lay *spotted* eggs, as M. Des Murs himself CANDIDLY allows!’

“Or, mon cher Directeur, rien n’est plus inexact, en tout point, que ce que me fait dire *si obligeamment* votre correspondant, pour se donner sans doute le plaisir de me mettre en défaut, de l’autre côté du Détroit.

“Il me suffira de reproduire *tout nettement* ce que j’ai dit, et ce que je maintiens, quant à la description de l’œuf du *Balaniceps* de ma collection :—

“Il est de forme ovée plus ou moins allongée, mesurant de 8½ à 9 centimètres de grand diamètre, sur 6 centimètres de petit diamètre. Sa coquille est d’un blanc légèrement azure, ce ton acquérant plus d’intensité dans la transparence du test ; la cristallisation en paraît assez fine et homogène, mais *laisse apercevoir des PORES* passablement indiqués par des espèces de

PIQUETURES *plus ou moins espacées*, et en plus petit nombre vers le petit bout : particularité qu'offrent également et l'œuf des Grues et celui des Ibis, mais notamment celui des Spatules. Car malgré les rapports du *Baléniceps* avec le Marabou (*Leptoptilos*), si bien indiqués par J. Verreaux, nous n'en avons pu saisir aucun entre l'œuf de l'un et de l'autre, *pas plus que nous n'avons trouvé trace de taches brunes ou autres sur celui du Baléniceps, nous le répétons, d'UN BLANC UNIFORME, empreint seulement par fois de SOUILLURES ÉTRANGÈRES À TOUTE ESPÈCE DE COLORATION NATURELLE.*'

" Il résulte bien évidemment de cette citation, que vous retrouverez également page 434 de l'ouvrage que j'ai eu le plaisir de vous offrir, et dont, même après le reproche immérité d'*ingénuité*, je n'ai pas à retrancher une lettre, que mon contradicteur, si sûr de lui-même, ou a mal lu ma description, ou n'y a rien compris.

" C'est sans doute un malheur de ne pas posséder une langue autre que sa sienne ; et ce malheur je suis tout le premier à y compâtrir pour mon propre compte : aussi, lorsque je ne me trouve pas de l'avis d'un auteur étranger, ai-je toujours soin d'exprimer avec réserve, et en termes convenables, mes dissidences d'opinion.

" J'aurais donc bien de me plaindre auprès de vous, et auprès de vos nombreux lecteurs, du terme d'*ingénuité* dont me gratifie votre correspondant, et que je ne puis véritablement, avec tous les ménagemens possibles, que lui renvoyer à lui-même, qui prend pour une indication *de taches*, sur des œufs *que je décris d'un blanc uniforme*, l'indication *de petits trous* que les pores, plus accusés en certains endroits, permettent d'apercevoir à l'œil nu sur la coquille.

" Quant aux mœurs du *Baléniceps*, je n'en fais l'objet d'aucune discussion : j'ai indiqué mon auteur, ce n'est pas mon affaire. Mon Dieu ! Gould a bien représenté cet oiseau avec un petit crocodile dans le bec ! il n'y a pas loin de cette espèce de sauriens à de petites tortues, ou aux chéloniens. Je n'attache donc aucune importance sérieuse à cette question de nourriture. Ce qu'il en résulte, jusqu'ici pour la science, c'est que le correspondant de Gould a vu le *Baléniceps* se nourrir de crocodiles

(petits), celui de Verreaux, de petites tortues, et M. Petherick, de poissons.

“ Pour ce que j’ai dit du *Passer montanus*, c’est une simple question de classification, et jusqu’à présent les opinions ont été assez libres sur ce point pour permettre toute espèce de tentative à cet égard, sans qu’on fut exposé au reproche de ridicule. N’a-t-il pas plu à l’honorable M. G. R. Gray de séparer tout-à-fait les *Capitoninae* des *Bucconinae*, et au Prince Ch. Bonaparte, d’agir de même au sujet des *Cypselinae* et des *Hirundininae*, sans qu’on les accusât de *ridicule* ou d’*ingénuité*? Chacun d’eux avait son système scientifique ; voilà tout. Pourquoi ne nous serait-il pas permis de rapprocher le genre *Passer* au genre *Ploceus*? Nos motifs, nous les avons donnés : c’est que nous croyons, en cette matière, les caractères tirés des mœurs et de l’œuf de l’oiseau, beaucoup plus déterminans que celui auquel s’est arrêté le Prince Ch. Bonaparte.

“ Trêve donc de ces points d’exclamation qui sentent trop le Grand Seigneur, et qu’il faut laisser à ce profond naturaliste, à qui d’ailleurs sa haute position scientifique pouvait bien les faire pardonner.

“ En définitive, il me semblait que j’avais rendu assez de services à la science oologique depuis près de trente ans que je m’en occupe, et fait preuve de connaissances assez spéciales en cette matière, pour que je me crûsse, en Angleterre surtout, à l’abri de ces petites critiques sans dignité, et de ce que j’appellerais ces mauvais procédés.

“ Si j’avais reconnu, ou signalé ce que l’on appelle oologiquement des *taches* sur l’œuf du *Baleniceps*, est-ce que je l’aurais comparé à celui du *Phenicopterus* et du *Pelecanus*? ce rapprochement seul aurait dû faire réfléchir votre correspondant.

“ J’espère donc de votre impartialité, mon cher Directeur, que vous voudrez bien insérer ma réponse dans votre Journal ‘l’Ibis,’ afin que vos lecteurs qui ont lu l’accusation lisent aussi la défense ; autrement j’en serais réduit à l’insérer dans la ‘Revue de Zoologie’ de Guérin ; et je préfère vous laisser le soin et l’honneur de cette rectification.

“ C’est vous faire assez comprendre, mon cher Monsieur, quelle

est ma confiance en votre loyauté bien connue, et quels sont pour vous mes sentimens de haute estime et de considération.

“ O. DES MURS.”

With regard to the first point, we give M. Des Murs' remarks, in accordance with his request; but it will be observed, that the whole ground of his complaint rests on an erroneous interpretation of what we have said. M. Des Murs has mistranslated the passage complained of, and given it a meaning exactly contrary to that which it conveys in the original. Far from implying that he “advanced” the theory that the *Baleniceps* lays “spotted” eggs, we stated that M. Des Murs “candidly allows” (*avoue franchement*) that on this point M. Verreaux's correspondent was in error. We, therefore, thought M. Des Murs “unwise” in accepting M. Verreaux's correspondent's statements on other points relating to the habits of this bird. M. Des Murs' description of the egg of the *Baleniceps* is sufficiently accurate, and we have no fault to find with it. As concerns the second point, we admit that the subject of zoological classification is one on which considerable latitude of opinion is allowable. But when any new and startling theory is propounded, it is hard upon the critic not to be allowed the use even of a note or two of admiration!

Mr. S. Stevens has kindly communicated to us the following extracts from letters recently received from Mr. A. R. Wallace:—

“Awaiya, Ceram, Nov. 26, 1859.

“I have nothing particular to say now, except that Ceram is a *wretched place* for birds. I have been here a month, and have got *literally* not a single pretty or good bird of any kind, except the small Lory I sent before from Amboyna; and, what is more, neither European residents nor natives know of a single handsome bird in the country, except one or two Lories and Pigeons, which I have not yet got or seen. When Mr. Gould and others talked about the *very fine* birds of Ceram, you should have asked them to specify them, that I might know what to inquire or look for. My only hope is now in the eastern part of the island; but I cannot expect there anything but one or two fine Lories. In

Coleoptera and Butterflies I shall do better, though almost all are the same as at Amboyna. I am at present confined to the house from the bites of an *Acarus*, which produces inflamed sores on the legs, though it is invisibly small. My three best men have all left me—one sick, another gone home to his sick mother, and the third and best is married in Ternate, and his wife *would not let him go*: he, however, remains working for me, and is going again to the eastern part of Gilolo.”

“Passo, Island of Amboyna, Dec. 31, 1859.

“My letter was returned to me because I had not prepaid the postage as far as Singapore. I now add a few lines. I have just arrived here, being quite tired of the barrenness of Ceram. I shall stay about three weeks, and then go to East Ceram and Kè, if possible.”

“Passo, Feb. 14, 1860.

“I send you this *vid* Marseilles, in order that you may get for me, as soon as possible, three cheap small double-barrelled guns, and send them overland to Ternate, to be ready for my next year’s campaign to *New Guinea*. They are absolutely necessary for me, as I have now with me Charles Allen, who went out with me, and we must have a double quantity of tools to work with. He is now starting from N. Ceram and Mysolè, while I go to E. Ceram and Kè. I expect to get some grand collections yet to send you. I am now packing up my Ceram and Amboyna collections to send you. In birds they are miserably poor—only *one* being, I think, *new*, and very interesting from being a second species of the Celebes’ genus *Basilornis*. The few specimens of *Tanysiptera* were only obtained by two men going out for a month after nothing else; and the beautiful *Lorius domicella* was equally scarce, though domesticated specimens are abundant. There is scarcely anything else of interest but the unique *Platycercus amboinensis* (not found in Amboyna, however), which will show that my Dorey Bird was a distinct species.”

Mr. Blyth writes from Calcutta, April 31st, as follows:—

“The Cassowary which I described to you (see ‘Ibis,’ 1860, p. 193) is now more than half-grown, and in company with two

of the common species. It is decidedly new, and I have described it as *Casuarus uno-appendiculatus*—rather a long name, but descriptive of its most strongly-marked peculiarity. The casque is much the same at this age as in *Casuarus galeatus*, but the colouring of the bare parts is altogether different, and the plumage much paler in colouring.”

Mr. Edward Newton's last letters from Mauritius are dated May 4th. He has been unable to send home any further collection of birds; indeed his time has been so fully occupied by other duties, as to prevent him from employing himself to any great purpose in those researches to which he is as much as ever attached. We may remark, that the species mentioned in our last Number ('Ibis,' 1860, p. 201), though with an indication of uncertainty, as "*Turdus ourovang*," proves to be *Ivocincla olivacea*, Blyth; *Hypsipetes olivacea* of Bonaparte (Consp. Av. i. 261). It is not distinguishable generically from the *Hypsipeta* of Continental India.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

SIR,—At the conclusion of the "Observations on the Birds of St. Croix," contributed to the 'Ibis' for 1859, by my brother Edward and myself, we subjoined some remarks on the species found in the neighbouring islands. I am now able to communicate a few more facts illustrative of the ornithology of the Virgin group. Mr. Riise has lately arrived in Europe, bringing with him a small but interesting collection, made chiefly in the Danish islands of St. Thomas and St. John. From the latter locality are several examples of *Gymnoglaux nudipes*, one of which is remarkable for the bright hue of its plumage, exhibiting in this respect a perfect analogy to the rufescent stage observable in many of the *Strigidae*, and especially in the well-known cases of *Scops asio* and *Syrnium aluco*. From St. Thomas, Mr. Riise's collection includes specimens of *Scops porto-ricensis* (with two eggs), *Elainea riisii*, Selater* (the first examples of which were obtained by Mr. O. Salvin in May 1859), *Ægialites vociferus*,

* Allied to *Elainea pagana*—described at a recent meeting of the Zoological Society (June 12th, 1860).—ED.

Spatula clypeata, *Mareca americana*, and, singularly enough, one example of *Eupsychortyx sonnini*, which last I can only suppose to be an importation from the mainland of South America. From Bieque or Crab Island Mr. Riise has also obtained *Molothrus sericeus* (Licht.), in no way differing from South-American specimens of that bird.

In a letter which I lately had the honour of receiving from Professor Reinhardt, that gentleman kindly informed me that he had not long since procured from St. Croix an adult female example of the common *Picus varius* of the United States,—a species of so wide a range, that he had formerly obtained it from Greenland (lat. 61° N.) (Kjöbenh. Videnskab. Meddels. 1853).

In our "Observations," my brother and myself stated that we had reason to believe that one of the *Picidae* occurred in St. Croix, and subsequently we were led to suggest that *Melanerpes portoricensis* might prove to be the species meant by our informants. The value of our suggestion is therefore impaired, though not wholly destroyed, by Professor Reinhardt's interesting communication.

Yours, &c., ALFRED NEWTON.

Elveden, June 11th, 1860.

The sale of a portion of the duplicate eggs from the collection of the late Mr. John Wolley took place, as advertised, at Stevens's Rooms, on the 30th and 31st of May last. The total amount realized, as we are informed, was £329 5s. 6d. for 376 lots, including the eggs of 130 species, most of which had been obtained in Lapland. The attendance of buyers was good, and the prices which many of the specimens fetched shows the high value set upon Mr. Wolley's authority. Eggs of *Falco fulvus* (Scotch) were sold at £4; *Strix lapponica*, £2 4s. to £2 8s.; *Strix tengmalmi*, about the same; *Anthus rufogularis* (*cervinus*), £1 3s.; *Pyrrhula enucleator*, £2 2s. to £2 12s.; *Bombicilla garrula*, £3 to £3 7s. 6d.; *Totanus fuscus*, £1 to £1 5s.; *T. glottis*, 16s. to £1 5s.; *Limosa rufa*, £5; *Scolopax gallinula*, £1 14s. to £1 19s.; *Tringa platyrhyncha*, 13s. to £1 2s.; *T. temminckii*, 14s. to £1; *T. maritima*, 17s. to £1 3s.; *Anser bernicla*, £1 13s.; *Mergus albellus*, £5 5s.; *Lestris parasitica* (*buffonii*), £5 10s., &c., &c. The proceeds of the sale are to be applied to the publication of Mr. Wolley's notes, which will be

edited by Mr. Alfred Newton, and will form a Catalogue of the collection as now in the possession of the gentleman last mentioned. This work, the 'Ootheca Wolleyana,' cannot fail to prove of great interest to all naturalists, and will, we hope, make its appearance in the course of a twelvemonth.

With reference to Mr. Powys's mention of the Owls in Andalusia (*Scops zorca* and *Strix flammea*) going into the churches and drinking the holy oil (Ibis, ii. p. 134), Mr. J. H. Gurney remarks that Señor R. Montes de Oca, who was the collector of a fine series of birds in Southern Mexico (described in P.Z.S. 1859, p. 362), told him the same story of *Syrnium zonocercum*—a common species in that country—and stated that, besides entering churches after the oil, it frequented factories, where it was said to get oil from the machinery! Is this a fact, or a Spanish notion imported into the New World by the settlers of that nation?

In a recent letter from Washington, Prof. S. F. Baird, of the Smithsonian Institution, mentions the discovery by Mr. Xantus (who is continuing his researches at Cape S. Lucas, the southern extremity of the Lower Californian peninsula) of a new Hummingbird of the genus *Amazilia**

From Professor S. F. Baird we also learn that great efforts are being made to promote the study of Oology in America. There were no less than six Northern expeditions planned to be executed during the present season, from all of which he had expectation of eggs.

1. Mr. Kennicott spends his season on Great Slave Lake, at

* Mr. Gould has just received specimens of this bird, and of three other *Trochilidæ* recently described by Mr. G. N. Lawrence of New York. The *Amazilia* (which bears attached to it the name *A. xantusi*) is evidently the female of a species of *Heliopædica*, the male of which (from Southern California) has been named by Mr. Lawrence *Heliopædica castaneo-cauda*. The species is new, and one of great interest, being a strict congener of *H. melanotis* of Mexico and Central America. The second of the birds described by Mr. Lawrence is a Bogota skin, hardly different from the ordinary *Helimaster longirostris*, which he has proposed to call *H. stuartiæ*; and the third—the type of his *Mellisuga merrittii*—is, as Mr. Gould believes, the female of *Clais guimeti*. The latter is from Veragua.—ED.

Fort Resolution, the head-quarters of the Ducks, Geese, Swans, Cranes, &c. 2. Mr. Drexler left Montreal April 3rd, for James's Bay. He will probably establish himself at Big River, on the eastern side, where aquatic birds abound. 3. A party to the coast of Labrador as far as lat. 55° , to start May 25th. 4. A party to the coast of Greenland, and thence to Labrador, about June 25th. 5. The solar eclipse (July 18) party to Cape Chudleigh, lat. 60° . 6. Dr. Hayes's Arctic Expedition.

The Gardens of the Zoological Society now contain a collection of living Struthious birds more complete than any that has been yet formed, embracing no less than ten species. The Ostriches are represented by a fine pair of the northern variety of *Struthio camelus*: the genus *Rhea* by examples of three species—a fine male *Rhea darwinii*, two females of *Rhea americana*, and a male of the recently described *Rhea macrorhyncha*, Selater, the smallest of the group. The Cassowaries, of the Moluccas, have also received an addition in the shape of a young bird, just added to the collection, distinguished by the two throat-lappets being separated from each other, upon which a species (*Casuarus bicarunculatus**) has been founded. This specimen, with a nearly adult male *Casuarus galeatus*, and three Mooruks (*Casuarus bennettii*), form a fine series of this division of Struthious birds, which however yet requires Mr. Blyth's *Casuarus uno-appendiculatus*, and Mr. Wall's (perhaps somewhat problematical) *Casuarus australis*, to render it complete. Of the Australian form of *Struthionidæ*—*Dromæus*—the Society have a pair of adults of the common species (*D. novæ hollandiæ*), besides an immature bird, and a chick lately hatched in the incubator, which is carefully nurtured by a domestic hen. Of Mr. Bartlett's new Spotted Emeu of Western Australia (*D. irroratus*) there are also two examples, representing the old and young plumage of this conspicuous species. The female Mantell's *Apteryx*, which has lately signalized herself by laying a series of enormous eggs, completes this remarkable collection.

* Selater, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1860, p. 211.